

## OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive defines Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) policy.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** The directive outlines policies and responsibilities for the VHA OSH Program. Funding for the program is paid from existing funds at those VHA organizations establishing programs.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Deputy Under Secretary of Health for Operations and Management (10N), is responsible for the contents of this Directive.
- 4. RELATED DOCUMENTS:** VHA Handbook 7701.1, Occupational Safety and Health Program Procedures.
- 5. RESCISSIONS :** None.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of March 2008.

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**1. PURPOSE.** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines policy and assigns responsibility for the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program in accordance with Federal regulations, Executive Orders (E.O.s) and VHA policy.

**2. POLICY.** It is VHA policy to maintain safe and healthful work environments for VHA employees through the application of hazard assessment, safe work practices, administrative and engineering controls, employee training, and protective equipment; and to prohibit reprisals against employees who exercise their rights under the VHA OSH program;

**3. ACTION.** VHA organizations must coordinate efforts to ensure that all OSH requirements are satisfied and that a safe and healthful workplace is provided. Responsibilities are assigned as follows:

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for:

- (1) Developing VHA policy and programs to address safety and health issues;
- (2) Ensuring that Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISNs) provide OSH support to assigned VHA facilities;
- (3) Ensuring VHA programs, designs, and specifications comply with OSH requirements;
- (4) Ensuring staffing and funding are adequate to implement the VHA OSH Program; and
- (5) Recognizing significant contributions to the VHA OSH Program through special awards.

b. **VISN Directors.** VISN Directors are responsible for:

- (1) Ensuring VISN employees are provided a safe and healthful work environment.
- (2) Developing plans to achieve OSH policies and goals established by the Under Secretary for Health and the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (DUSHOM).
- (3) Ensuring staffing, funding, support, and resources are adequate to support to local VHA facilities in implementing VHA OSH policies and requirements.
- (4) Ensuring VISN construction and maintenance programs, designs, and specifications comply with VHA OSH requirements.
- (5) Recognizing significant contributions to the VISN OSH Program through special awards.
- (6) Providing periodic and annual accident, injury and illness rates to the Director, Safety and Technical Support.

- (7) Establishing OSH performance standards for VHA facility Directors;
- (8) Supporting the employee right to report unsafe working conditions without reprisal.

c. **VHA Facility Directors.** VHA facility Directors are mandated to:

- (1) Ensure VHA facility employees are provided a safe and healthful work environment.
- (2) Develop plans to achieve OSH policies and goals established by the VISN Director.
- (3) Ensure adequate staffing and funding to implement effective programs in accordance with VHA, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) requirements.
- (4) Ensure facility construction and maintenance projects, designs, and specifications comply with VISN OSH requirements.
- (5) Ensure effective management and timely submittal of Office of Worker's Compensation programs (OWCP) claims in accordance with VHA and Department of Labor (DOL) requirements.
- (6) Ensure VHA supervisors receive OSH training and are accountable for program compliance.
- (7) Recognize significant contributions to the facility OSH Program through special awards.
- (8) Provide periodic review of the VHA OSH Program to ensure compliance with applicable federal standards, executive orders and VHA policy.
- (9) Afford employees working at non-VA facilities protection equal to the VHA OSH Program.
- (10) Implement all requirements within the terms of collective bargaining agreements;
- (11) Fund OSH initiatives from the existing facility funds.
- (12) Involve employee representatives in the OSH program administration and scheduled workplace inspections, provide resources and encourage the participation of staff and union representatives in local Federal Safety and Health Councils;
- (13) Coordinate facility OSH personnel and the Resident Engineer to ensure safe contractor work practices and OSHA project compliance;

d. **Facility Supervisors.** Facility Supervisors are to:

- (1) Enforce OSH policy and standards within their assigned workplace.
- (2) Evaluate the hazards of each job.

- (3) Identify and report unsafe workplace conditions and initiate corrective action.
- (4) Encourage employee safe-work practices and suggestions for improving the OSH Program.
- (5) Correct employees demonstrating unsafe work practices; and initiate re-training.
- (6) Report and initiate investigation of employee workplace injuries and illnesses; and ensure employees receive prompt and appropriate medical attention.
- (7) Ensure employees receive OSH training in the recognition of workplace hazards, safe work practices, and the use of personal protective equipment.
- (8) Provide material safety data sheets and approved personal protective equipment for hazardous work processes.
- (9) Notify facility management of any employee fatality, and in-patient hospitalization of three or more employees, including contractors' employees, as soon as possible, but no later than 30 minutes after the discovery of the incident by any employee.

e. **VHA Employees.** VHA Employees are responsible for:

- (1) Following safe work practices and the proper use of personal protective equipment;
- (2) Reporting unsafe workplace conditions to supervisors and initiate corrective action;
- (3) Reporting work-related injuries and illnesses to supervisors; and
- (4) Completing assigned medical surveillance and training requirements.

#### 4. REFERENCES

- a. Public Law 101-336, Americans With Disabilities Act.
- b. E.O. 12196, Occupational Safety and Health Programs for Federal Employees.
- c. E.O. 13043, Increasing Safety Belt Use in the United States.
- d. OSHA Publication 2014, Recordkeeping and Reporting Guidelines for Federal Agencies.
- e. Public Law 91-596, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act), Section 19.
- f. Title 29, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 1960, Basic Program Elements for Federal Employee OSH Programs and Related Matters.